

Who needs a CDL?

A commercial driver license (CDL) is required for anyone operating a vehicle that:

- Weighs over 26,000 pounds. To determine the weight of the vehicle, use the highest of the following weights:
 - ~ manufacturer's gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR)
 - ~ manufacturer's gross combination weight rating (GCWR)
 - ~ actual weight
 - ~ registered weight
- Carries hazardous materials that require placarding under federal law. (Placarding requirements are found in Title 49, Code of Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, part 397.)
- Is designed or used to carry 16 or more persons including the driver.

What does the law require?

- Creation of a classified licensing system consisting of:
 - ~ **Class A** – Any combination of vehicles with a GVWR, actual weight, or registered weight over 26,000 pounds provided the GVWR, actual weight, or registered weight of the towed vehicle(s) is more than 10,000 pounds.

Some examples: tractor-trailer combinations with single or double trailers, '18 wheelers.'

~ **Class B** – Any single vehicle with a GVWR, actual weight, or registered weight over 26,000 pounds or such vehicle towing a vehicle with a GVWR, actual weight, or registered weight of 10,000 pounds or less.

Some examples: dump trucks, most buses.

~ **Class C** – Any single vehicle with a GVWR, actual weight, or registered weight of 26,000 pounds or less (or such vehicle towing a vehicle less than 10,000 pounds) transporting hazardous materials in amounts requiring placarding, or designed or used to carry 16 or more persons including the driver.

Some examples: pickup trucks, small buses, and other small vehicles carrying passengers or placarded for hazardous materials.

~ **Class D** – Automobiles and light trucks.

~ **Class M** – Motorcycles.

- Issuing of only one license to each driver.
- Testing of commercial drivers. Commercial operators must pass a knowledge exam and skills test in the type of vehicle they drive. School bus drivers are required to pass a knowledge test and abbreviated driving skills test at each renewal. Commercial drivers with an H endorsement are required to pass a hazardous materials knowledge test at each renewal.

- Enforcement of the law is through the Commercial Driver License Information System (CDLIS), a computer network of all states. Wisconsin has 253,129* commercial drivers entered on CDLIS as of December 1, 2003. This includes commercial instruction permits and licenses.

What is an endorsement?

An endorsement allows you to drive a vehicle with special operating characteristics or with passengers. To receive any of the following endorsements you must pass special tests:

T – Double/Triple Trailers

N – Tank Vehicles

H – Hazardous Materials

S – School Bus

P – Passenger

F – Farm Service (Restricted)

For more information contact:

Bureau of Driver Services

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*This number for 2003 does not include 30,321 expired CDL licenses. Past numbers did include expired CDL licenses.